

FIFTH MEETING OF THE SOUTH AFRICA – EUROPEAN UNION JOINT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION COMMITTEE

14-15 April 2005, Pretoria

JOINT CONCLUSIONS

The fifth meeting of the South Africa – European Union (SA-EU) Joint Science & Technology Cooperation Committee (JSTCC) was held in Pretoria on 14-15 April 2005. Convened under the SA-EU Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology, the JSTCC is tasked with reviewing collaboration between the two parties, including South African participation in the Framework Programmes, sharing new developments in science and technology policy matters and devising strategies for enhancing future collaboration.

The fifth JSTCC meeting reconfirmed the strategic and very positive nature of the SA-EU S&T Partnership. The Co-Chairs of the meeting, Dhesigen Naidoo and Dr Andras Siegler, respectively Deputy Director-General: International Cooperation and Resources at the South African Department of Science and Technology and Director: International Scientific Cooperation at the European Commission's Directorate-General Research, expressed their satisfaction with the progress achieved during the past year in promoting collaboration, noting a number of important successes being registered. They, however, also agreed that significant potential still existed to further improve and deepen cooperation.

The meeting included a fruitful exchange of views on science and technology policy developments, most notably briefings by the South African delegation on the publication of the country's new National Research and Development Survey, and by the European Commission on the advancement of the European Research Area and related policy initiatives as well as the preparation of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). These exchanges highlighted the partners' respective commitments to increasing their expenditure on research and development, and their efforts to optimally harness knowledge and innovation as instruments to promote economic growth and competitiveness, as well as social development and cohesion. The meeting agreed to continue a regular policy dialogue in the light of the rich scope for mutually beneficial learning, to be gained from these exchanges.

The meeting reviewed South Africa's engagement with the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6), noting the successful participation by South African research organisations in several of the FP6's thematic priorities as well in the focused activity for cooperation with developing countries (INCO). South African researchers performed best in the FP6's thematic priorities for Biotechnology and Genomics for Health; Food Safety and Quality; Global Change and Ecosystems; as well as Nanotechnology, Materials and Production. The meeting also noted that little or no successes had been achieved in the thematic priority areas for

Aeronautics and Space; Citizens and Governance in the Knowledge-based Society; as well as the FP6 Marie Curie Mobility Instruments.

In the light of these results, the JSTCC reviewed efforts undertaken to improve South African participation in the FP6, most notably the launch and operationalisation of the country's Network of National Contact Points (NCPs) in 2004. The NCPs are tasked with improving awareness and rendering FP6 advice to South African participants. The ability of South African researchers to enter European FP6 consortia was identified as one of the key challenges for improved success in FP6. In this regard the important role to be played by the NCPs in networking with their European counterparts was highlighted. The meeting took note of the significant improvement of South African participation in the FP6 thematic priority for Information Society Technologies, following the concerted interventions by the responsible NCP. The JSTCC agreed that the efforts of the NCPs should be stepped up and that their institutional interface with the European Commission should be strengthened. The meeting concluded that the inclusion of specific reference to international cooperation in the Work Programmes of the thematic priorities significantly enhanced developing countries' participation, as demonstrated by the inclusion of the EU Water Initiative objectives in the Global Change and Ecosystems Work Programme.

Looking to the future the meeting discussed the imminent launch of the European South African Science and Technology Advancement Programme (ESASTAP), a Specific Support Action supported under the FP6 by the European Commission. ESASTAP will be a dedicated platform to promote SA-EU S&T cooperation to be managed by the Department of Science and Technology. It will notably also seek to exploit the synergies between Framework Programme participation and South Africa's bilateral science and technology cooperation with the Member States of the European Union and other countries associated with the Framework Programmes. Within the context of the ESASTAP deployment, the parties agreed to undertake concerted efforts to promote collaboration in areas such as aeronautics, earth observation, surface transport and the hydrogen economy where currently little collaboration exists. Renewed joint efforts will also be undertaken to promote improved South African uptake of the Marie Curie Mobility Instruments, especially the International Incoming and Outgoing Fellowships.

Recalling their commitment at the fourth meeting of the JSTCC, the parties agreed that further consideration should be given to efforts to better leverage the European Programme for Reconstruction and Development (EPRD) for South African science and technology. The meeting noted with appreciation the efforts employed to prepare the Terms of Reference for a pre-feasibility study to be undertaken, which will examine opportunities for EPRD support, including possible sector-wide or budget support. The parties agreed to concertedly promote synergies between the science and technology and other instruments for SA-EU cooperation such as development cooperation. Within this context the

hosting by the South African Medical Research Council of the European Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) Secretariat was noted.

Finally, the Co-Chairs reaffirmed the parties' mutual commitment to science and technology multilateralism, and the need to promote interregional partnership strategies to harness science and technology for development. The parties' close collaboration as two of the Co-Chairs of the Group on Earth Observation (GEO) was noted as a prime example of such cooperation to advance the global sustainable development agenda. The meeting also explored avenues to improve the EU's interaction with continental and regional science and technology programmes in Africa, chiefly those of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Science and technology policy collaboration, specifically the exploration of appropriate twinning arrangements between NEPAD and EU partners, would also be promoted.

The parties agreed to collaborate in promoting the science and technology dialogue between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union launched at the 2002 Cape Town Forum on Research for Sustainable Development. The importance of a reinforced ACP-EU science and technology policy dialogue to inform the preparation of the FP7's cooperation activities with developing countries was underlined. Within this context the parties noted the urgency for stepped up research capacity-building in the ACP and the efforts of the various services in the European Commission to address this challenge, including the preparation of the ACP science and technology capacity-building programme.

The meeting concluded with both sides expressing their satisfaction with progress and their commitment to pursue collaboration with renewed vigour, both within the context of Framework Programme participation as well as through collaboration via other instruments. The meeting agreed on a first iteration of the SA-EU Science and Technology Action Plan for 2005-2006, which will serve as a flexible management tool, subject to periodic review, to guide joint efforts leading up to the next JSTCC meeting in 2006.

Pretoria, 15 April 2005